

<!-- /* Font Definitions */ @font-face {font-family:"Cambria Math"; panose-1:2 4 5 3 5 4 6 3 2 4; mso-font-charset:1; mso-generic-font-family:roman; mso-font-format:other; mso-font-pitch:variable; mso-font-signature:0 0 0 0 0 0;} @font-face {font-family:Cambria; panose-1:2 4 5 3 5 4 6 3 2 4; mso-font-charset:0; mso-generic-font-family:roman; mso-font-pitch:variable; mso-font-signature:-1610611985 1073741899 0 0 159 0;} @font-face {font-family:Calibri; panose-1:2 15 5 2 2 2 4 3 2 4; mso-font-charset:0; mso-generic-font-family:swiss; mso-font-pitch:variable; mso-font-signature:-1610611985 1073750139 0 0 159 0;} /* Style Definitions */ p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal {mso-style-unhide:no; mso-style-qformat:yes; mso-style-parent:""; margin:0in; margin-bottom:.0001pt; mso-pagination:widow-orphan; font-size:11.0pt; font-family:"Calibri","sans-serif"; mso-fareast-font-family:Calibri; mso-fareast-theme-font:minor-latin; mso-bidi-font-family:"Times New Roman";}.MsoChpDefault {mso-style-type:export-only; mso-default-props:yes; font-size:10.0pt; mso-ansi-font-size:10.0pt; mso-bidi-font-size:10.0pt;} @page Section1 {size:8.5in 11.0in; margin:1.0in 1.0in 1.0in 1.0in; mso-header-margin:.5in; mso-footer-margin:.5in; mso-paper-source:0;} div.Section1 {page:Section1;} --> Philadelphia Inquirer – November 12, 2009
By Josh Goldstein
Inquirer Staff Writer

Rep. John Adler (D., N.J.) announced yesterday that he hopes to require the Department of Veterans Affairs to report to Congress the quality of all the small programs in its hospitals and other medical facilities.

The goal is to prevent a repeat of problems that plagued prostate cancer care at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center as well as programs at other VA hospitals.

Adler's legislation focuses on three areas: small programs, where medical errors and poor care are most likely to avoid detection; radiation safety; and contracts with private doctors and hospitals.

"This bill will ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs takes steps to increase oversight and accountability of treatment programs like the failed brachytherapy program at the Philadelphia VA," Adler said yesterday.

Under the bill - the Veterans' Health and Radiation Safety Act, or HR 4062 - the VA would submit an annual report to Congress of all programs at its medical facilities that treat fewer than 100 patients a year.

Adler believes that will prevent those smaller programs from escaping scrutiny as happened at the Philadelphia VA, where the prostate brachytherapy program incorrectly dosed 98 of the 114 patients it treated with radioactive seed implants over six years.

Adler's bill also addresses two other criticisms raised by probes of the Philadelphia VA's brachytherapy program.

First is that the doctors, medical physicists, and nurses involved did not report the substandard treatments as required by federal regulations.

And second is that the Philadelphia VA's contract with the University of Pennsylvania department of radiation oncology to run the program was repeatedly renewed without an evaluation.

The bill would require weekly peer review of contracted services and written reports on contractors' performance.

It would also require that any VA employee or contractors in jobs that involve the use of radioactive material be trained in what is a reportable medical event.

The VA did not respond to comment requests on the bill.

Four local members of the House - Pennsylvania Democrats Bob Brady, Chaka Fattah, Allyson Y. Schwartz, and Joe Sestak - and two other Democrats on the Veterans Affairs Committee cosponsored the bill.